

Gallot slams plan to divide Senate district

By Billy Gunn

bgunn@thetowntalk.com
(318) 487-6381

The head of the state House committee that will play a major role in redrawing Louisiana election districts criticized a plan by a religious-conservative organization that would split Rapides Parish's Senate district into four.

Rep. Rick Gallot, D-Ruston and chairman of the House and Governmental Affairs Committee, on Tuesday singled out the Louisiana Family Forum's plan to divide Senate District 29 as an example of racially divisive politics that does nobody any good.

The plan would take away a Senate minority voting district in the New Orleans area and place it in parts of Rapides, Avoyelles and Pointe Coupee parishes, while divvying up the rest of Rapides to three Senate districts to the north and west.

Likening Louisiana's population to a multi-ingredient gumbo, Gallot said the "racial polarization" inherent in the Family Forum's Senate plan does the



Leandro Huebner/lhuebner@thetowntalk.com

State Rep. Rick Gallot, D-Ruston, speaks Tuesday to the Rotary Club of Alexandria about the process of redrawing legislative districts. Gallot is the chairman of the House and Governmental Affairs Committee that will oversee the redrawing of the election maps.

proposed Senate map used year 2000 numbers, which are useless now.

Gallot gave a PowerPoint presentation to The Rotary Club of Alexandria, and urged "civic-minded" residents to voice their opinions at upcoming meetings

Both House and Senate governmental affairs committees will conduct a meeting at Alexandria Convention Hall at 6 p.m. on March 1.

"As chairman ... at the end of the day I want everybody to be part of the process," Gallot said, adding that the meetings and

ATT JAN 19 2011

cess will be "as open and engaging and transparent as it's ever been."

Legislators on March 20 will begin redrawing election districts around Louisiana for Congress, the Legislature, the Public Service Commission, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, and state circuit appellate courts and the Supreme Court. The session ends April 13.

Mike Johnson, an attorney from Pineville, asked how Rapides voters could be assured that someone in the Legislature would fight to keep Senate District 29 as it is, covering almost the entire parish. Sen. Joe McPherson is term-limited from running again.

Before Gallot could answer, warning lights and horns sounded in Alexandria Convention Hall, sounding like a red alert aboard the Starship Enterprise commanded by Capt. James T. Kirk. Everyone exited.

Gallot later said that House members would observe the historical legislative etiquette of not interfering with the other